

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,

I apologize that I could not attend today's hearing. I had finally decided last year on my 74th birthday to "retire" from any professional or advocacy activities related to people with serious mental illnesses and their families. But this terrible corrupt scandal at Whiting Forensic is of extreme concern and I wanted to share my thoughts with you.

The horrific abuse of patients that has taken place at Whiting Forensic Institute should not be regarded in isolation. I believe that the Public Health Committee should examine the clinical, administrative, and quality control chain of command from the treatment unit to the Commissioner's office. Who is minding the store and where else might there be other horrific offenses?

I have worked and been an advocate for decades for better treatment and for conquering stigma about people with serious mental illnesses. It is very apparent that no one in charge at Whiting Forensic or at the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) was paying any attention to what was happening in their facilities.

Perhaps it is time for DMHAS' oversight of its facilities to be removed, and resources transferred to the Department of Public Health to independently monitor DMHAS' hospitals and state run programs. Perhaps the Governor should consider changes in leadership. Most definitely, the Public Health Committee should undertake an immediate and extensive investigation of the entire DMHAS oversight and monitoring program of how care is delivered.

If abuse of this magnitude had happened in any facility treating people with serious illnesses other than serious mental illnesses, the outcry would have been thunderous. Must we return to one of the darkest times in our history--to conditions that mirror Bedlam--for anyone to care?

Please do not accept the platitudes that this was an isolated situation. Abuse of this magnitude and for the duration of time it occurred is an indication of serious problems in DMHAS' competency, and I hope you can examine the failure of care in depth.

Thank you.

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